1: Titiev E-5 (1948) 1951 SG4 Araucanians SG4
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WITCHCRAFT AND CURING PRACTICES

BELIEF in witchcraft, ever widespread among the Araucanians, is still a pervasive element of their culture.[1] A witch or sorcerer, *kal·ku*, seldom operates individually, but is usually thought to be in league with others of his kind. Each *kal·ku* is supposed to train a youngster in the ways of sorcery, but the novice is sworn to secrecy and seldom practices witchery until he is old. Aged women are particularly apt to be suspected of witchcraft. By native definition, a *kal·ku* is one who deliberately harms or kills a person, generally upon request and payment by an enemy of the victim or else because of jealousy. A witch may or may not be related to the injured party, but he who employs a sorcerer must be prepared, if the victim succumbs, to have one of his own kinfolk die to even the score. In this sense, resort to witchcraft is regarded as a gamble.

A suspected witch was formerly tried before a *loñko* and an assembly of his followers. If the testimony of at least two witnesses or accusers was accepted, the sorcerer was supposed to be slain on the day of the victim's funeral.[2] According to one of the accounts I was given, based on stories a thirty-eight-year-old informant had heard in youth, a guilty witch was tied and dragged by a man on horseback from her home to a spot where a blazing fire had been kindled. She was then beheaded, but to prevent any artful recovery, she was cut into pieces and these were thrown into the fire to be burnt to ashes. If a chief did not want to inflict such severe punishment, he could have the accused witch driven off his territory. Together with her close relatives she would thus be forced to wander from place to place until she found a *loñko* who was willing to accept her and her party. Such a chief might be a distant kinsman, an old friend,

[1] Practically every source dealing with Araucanian culture contains some material on witchcraft and curing. Particularly full accounts that supplement this field report are readily available in Latcham, 1909, pp. 350–53; 1924, pp. 770–822, *et passim;* and Métraux, 1939.

[2] Cf. Molina, 1808, p. 78; and Smith, 1855, p. 237.

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754 a broad-minded or kindly individual, or a leader who was willing to take a chance in order to augment his following.
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Nowadays, for fear of retaliation, witches are neither killed nor driven away, but they may be induced to leave voluntarily by means of intensive whispering campaigns, or because their neighbors obviously shun them. In fact, it is part of the education of children to warn them to have nothing to do with people suspected of witchcraft. There is reason to believe that some of the Chilean Araucanians who go to Argentina are people under suspicion of being sorcerers.

WITCHCRAFT ACTIVITIES

754 Witches' sabbaths are supposed to be observed in underground caverns or *renũs*. Almost all caves or depressions in the earth are likely to be regarded as *renũs*, wherein dwell all manner of dangerous beasts whom the sorcerers use as familiars. Greatly feared in this context are a wide range of animals including lizards, snakes, foxes, butterflies, partridges, dogs, rats, and, particularly, any creatures of unfamiliar appearance, monsters, or freaks such as two-headed calves. The cries of many [787] birds, or the appearance of animals that unexpectedly cross one's path, are widely held to be portents of sickness and death. So deep-seated is the fear of unusual animals, that some Araucanians who visit the zoological gardens in Santiago come away convinced that the keepers and, by extension, all Chileans must be powerful witches.

754 Sorcerers exercise their power by controlling evil spirits, 776 the entire class of which may be termed *wekufũ*.[1] *Wekufũ* occur in many guises, especially in the shapes of the aforementioned beasts and monsters, but they may also take other forms. Conspicuous among these are *piwichen*, a terrifying vampire, sight or sound of which is a sure portent of death, and *choñchoñ*, which is described as a human head equipped with wings. To see or hear it while it is in flight portends death. Whether

[1] Latcham (1909, pp. 351 ff.) distinguished between *huecuvas* ("evil spirits") and *huecuvuyes* ("sorcerers"). He also set up separate categories for *dungure* ("diviner") and *machi* ("witch doctor" or "exorcist").